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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the collaborative activities among preservice and inservice personnel at a Professional Development School (PDS). Data was gathered from approximately 250 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students to assess measures of depression, attitude toward school, social functioning, and attributions. Relationships among these variables were determined (e.g., poor attitude was related to depression; social failure attributed to ability was related to depression). Educational personnel shared this informacion with the teachers of the elementary school students. Children were included in social skills training groups based on the data results. Parents were surveyed to get their impressions of the success of these and other activities of the PDS team members. These collaborative efforts served to unite university faculty, school psychology and education students, teachers, counselors, and administrators. The PDS school provided a variety of helpful training opportunities, and improved the quality of the educational environment for children. (JDM)

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Abstract

Promoting Academic and Behavioral Growth:

Collaboration at a Professional Development School

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The objectives of the presentation are to: a) describe the collaborative activities among various preservice and inservice personnel at a PDS; b) describe certain relationships among student variables (e.g., attributions, depression); and c) describe the results of a parent survey conducted by the PDS; survey results present parental views regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the PDS. Specifically, data were gathered from approximately 250 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students (e.g., measures of depression, attitude to school, attributions, social functioning). Relationships among those variables were determined (e.g., poor attitude to school was related to depression ($p < .01$); social failure attributed to ability was related to depression ($p < .01$). These relationships were shared by educational personnel such as school psychologists and special educators with the teachers of the elementary school children in workshop settings. Children were included into social skills training groups based on the data. Finally, parents were surveyed to get their impressions of the success of these and other activities of the PDS team members.

The collaborative effort which united university faculty, school psychology and education students, teachers, counselors, and administrators will be described. In addition, we will discuss the positive influence this collaborative effort had on the environment of the PDS. This session will be beneficial in that participants will see the value that collaboration brings to the PDS and how children stand to benefit from this relationship.

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Summary

Promoting Academic and Behavioral Growth:

Collaboration at a Professional Development School

Professional Development Schools (PDS) provide teaching practicum students and interns an opportunity to collaborate with educational professionals from various disciplines. In addition, the PDS brings university and public school personnel together in an applied setting so that research informs teaching and vice-versa (e.g., see Tutt & Newbold, 1996; Yerian & Grossman, 1997). In this paper our **purpose** is to describe a collaborative effort uniting university faculty (school psychology and elementary/special education), students (school psychology and elementary/special education interns) and teachers, counselors, and administrators from one PDS--an elementary school located in a small school system in a suburban community in east Tennessee. Specifically, **content** includes description of a multi-phase strategy, implemented by these collaborators, designed to improve the educational experiences of the students in grades 4, 5, and 6. First, data were gathered, then, based on the data, in-service workshops and small-group social skills training sessions were planned and implemented. The nature of the data allowed at-risk students to be identified and targeted early for the social skills training. We also describe results from a parent survey. The survey allowed parents an opportunity to express their views of the PDS environment. The **objective** is to inform participants about the collaborative efforts of students, teachers, interns, and university faculty as they influence positively the environment of the PDS.

The data-gathering phase occurred early in the school year; data were gathered by school psychology and elementary/special education interns from all children in grades 4, 5, and 6. Data

included self-report measures of explanatory style (effort, ability, chance, task difficulty attributions for social and academic success/failure), preference for learning styles (seven of Gardner's multiple intelligences), depression (from the Behavior Assessment System for Children or BASC) and attitude to school (also from the BASC). In addition, social skills were determined by a sociometric technique (i.e., name three children you like most/least); finally, academic achievement measures were obtained via end-of-year group achievement test scores. Children at-risk, defined as those who scored at or above 84th percentile on the BASC and at or below the 16th percentile rank on the sociometric measure, were targeted for small-group social skills training sessions conducted by the school counselor. In workshops the university-based school psychologist and special educator shared data with the PDS faculty. For example, the following relationships were shared, based on mean-difference analyses; alpha was set to .05 for all comparisons: gifted children's mean preference score for using a logical-mathematical problem solving style was significantly higher than the score for regular education children; gifted children's mean internal explanatory score for academic success (i.e., effort plus ability) was significantly higher than regular education children's; in turn, regular education children's internal explanatory scores were significantly higher than special education children's; there were no differences between gifted, regular, and special education children's mean scores on attitude to school and depression measures. Children from low socioeconomic status (SES) families (defined as those receiving free or reduced lunch) showed significantly higher (at-risk) depression scores. There was no SES difference on the attitude toward school measure. Some of the correlational analyses revealed the following relationships ($p < .01$): poor attitude to school was related to depression ($r = .35$); social failure attributed to ability was related to depression ($r = .52$); social

failure attributed to effort was related to depression (r = .46), social failure attributed to task difficulty was related to depression (r = .49); social failure attributed to chance was related to depression (.r = .35). Academic failure attributed to internal causes was related to depression (r = .23). Workshop content included not only the data revealing the relationships, but also strategies teachers could use to enhance effortful attributions and behavior and build social skills.

The PDS environment allows collaboration among in-service educators and university students; public school children stand to benefit from the collaboration. Anecdotal and informal data from the participating professionals confirm the value of collaboration. In order to determine the extent to which parents value the PDS environment a survey was conducted. On a five-point likert-like scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) parents gave high marks to the PDS for the following items: teachers provide instructional activities that involve students in their learning (94% strongly agree); the educational program offered to students at this school is of high quality (92% strongly agree); our school's programs help students to understand and get along with other people (86% strongly agree); and for the most part I am satisfied with our school (95% strongly agree). Obviously, the PDS school provides a variety of helpful training opportunities; more importantly it provides a quality educational environment for children; these results are consistent with those of Schack and Overturf (1994), who reported that teachers, students, preservice teachers, and college professors who were associated with a professional development team (PDT) believed that the team produced positive outcomes. (The PDT is described as a scaled-down version of the PDS.)

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